

The third Sunday of Advent is known as the "Gaudete" Sunday or Rejoice Sunday." Even though we live in a world of technology, gadgets, comforts, and luxuries, yet fewer and fewer people seem to experience true joy and satisfaction in their lives. Rather we continue to experience more and more worry, anxiety and even doubt in our lives.

In the early church, doubt has been a negative word. Faith, not doubt, is the great word of the church. All of us present here today are here because of our faith. We are so full of faith, and so free of doubt. But, beneath the skins of many of us is planted the seed of honest doubt. We seldom share these feelings with anyone; but doubts are there, and they are real. It could be about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, about the Church, or about our faith. Your worship does not express your doubts or uncertainties. This capacity to doubt can often lead to some of life's most profound questions.

You'll remember John's message last week was, "Repent and be Converted" John wasn't afraid to proclaim his message to religious leaders and royalty alike. He wasn't even afraid to proclaim it to King Herod himself. That was why he was in jail. He knew his time was up. Standing up for Jesus would cost him his life. There was one thing that John wanted to know before he died. John wanted to know beyond doubt if Jesus was really the Messiah. He had given everything he had" including, in a matter of days, his very life. He wanted to know if it was worthwhile, or it is all in vain. John had believed Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, but in the face of certain death he has some doubts. So, he sent some of his followers to find Jesus and ask him, "Are you the one who is to come or are we to wait for another?" John the Baptist found himself in a disappointing and disheartening predicament. Things were not working out like he had expected.

John Was Disappointed because He Had Different Expectations. He expected the same kind of Messiah everyone else expected" one who would drive out the Romans and establish the kingdom of God. While in prison John must have wondered why more wasn't happening. What's he waiting for? Why doesn't he drive the Romans out? He was disappointed because of his faulty expectations.

A few years ago, in Reader's Digest a lady reported searching for the perfect birthday card for her husband. She came across a promising one. On the outside it read: "Sweetheart, you're the answer to my prayers." Then she turned to the inside, which was inscribed like this: "You're not what I prayed for exactly, but apparently you are the answer."

John the Baptist expected the Messiah to come with might and power, but that is not what he saw. 1. Jesus was born not to royalty, but to a peasant woman. 2. He functioned not as a military ruler, but as a servant. 3. He came not as a judge, but as a forgiving redeemer. 4. He was most concerned with the powerless: the blind and the lame, the lepers and the deaf, and the poor and the out-cast.

It was not Jesus who was at fault, but John's expectations. That is the first reason he was gripped by disappointment. Sometimes we are disappointed, not because what we receive is bad, but because we have faulty expectations. Like John, we too can have wrong expectations from Jesus and these unanswered expectations can drive us to doubt our faith in Christ.

The Second Reason John was Looking for the **Wrong Signs**. The followers of John the Baptist asked Jesus John's question, "Are you the one who is to come or are we to wait for another?" Jesus answered, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: The blind receives their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them." The day of the Lord had arrived. There was evidence that God's kingdom had begun. "Just look around," Jesus told John's followers, "to see what is happening." These are the concrete tangible signs whereby people would be able to recognize the true Messiah. It is the fulfillment of the messianic prophecy of Isaiah expressed in today's first reading (Is. 35.6).

Jesus' mission was not to establish a powerful new empire and bring down God's wrath and anger on the Roman army of occupation, Jesus was not a political Messiah nor an economic Savior. But those aren't the kinds of signs that impress people. We want greatness and power at large. That's not God's way. God chooses to work in the little insignificant places of life" **like a manger, a carpenter's shop, and a cross.**

Third Reason John didn't **Give God Time**. Advent is about waiting expectantly for the Lord's coming. We live in a world where we can get answers to many things quickly: an instant response by cellphone; text message, a quick answer by checking the computer, fast food etc. The danger is that oftentimes we expect God to respond at once especially in sickness and trial. Like John, we too say, "**I want it now!**" But God takes his own sweet time. God doesn't work according to our time schedule, but according to His. Certainly, he wasn't working according to John the Baptist's timetable. But he was working.

Bethlehem teaches us about **expectations, about signs, and about patience**. God begins with simple babe and humble surroundings, and He works slowly, surely. But He is at work. Let us not lose hope. Is your life filled with disappointments because you have unrealistic expectations? Are, you looking in all the wrong places to find your happiness? Have you learned to wait upon the Lord? Many people seem to be looking for a Christ who will perform the necessary, as well as the wished for, miracles in their lives and, in the process, settle for something less than "**the One who is to come.**"

God Bless You.